

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 351

By Favors

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Orange Grove Center on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary and for its extraordinary work in improving the lives of citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

WHEREAS, in 1953, a group of enlightened parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities banded together with the common goal of nurturing, educating, training, and supporting their children to lead productive and fulfilling lives; and

WHEREAS, each of those children was excluded from educational and other opportunities available to children without such disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the parents believed that their children were capable and deserving of educational opportunities to maximize their inclusion in the fabric of the community; and

WHEREAS, the parents secured from the Chattanooga Board of Education the donation of the abandoned Orange Grove Elementary School on Main Street and then partnered with the Chattanooga Jaycees and many community leaders and businesses, spending untold hours cleaning up the school and restoring it to its original intended purpose of educating children; and

WHEREAS, the school opened its doors on October 1, 1953, with a class of over twenty children; and

WHEREAS, the parents, teachers, and business and community leaders involved in the first school were radical in their belief in and commitment to the idea that all children are entitled to be educated to the best of their abilities; and

WHEREAS, the Orange Grove School flourished and grew quickly, adding students and facilities, in large measure due to the unwavering commitment and civic mindedness of the Jaycees, who championed the school through innumerable fundraising efforts and uninterrupted service on the Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, the model of cooperation exhibited by the founders and first partners of Orange Grove laid the groundwork for continuous collaboration between Orange Grove and local and state governments and officials; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, state law prohibited the use of state school funds on children who had been deemed “uneducable,” and individuals involved with Orange Grove drafted legislation that passed in 1955 changing the law and allowing funds to be spent on the education of all children, including those served by Orange Grove; and

WHEREAS, the progressive ideas embodied in the opening of the school in 1953 were harbingers of state and federal legislation guaranteeing the right of access to education by children with all kinds of disabilities, notably the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997; and

WHEREAS, Orange Grove has grown from a four-room school house serving twenty children to a large main campus and sixty-five residences throughout Hamilton County serving 750 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities ranging in age from eight to eighty-six; and

WHEREAS, Orange Grove has continued to be a leader in developing services and programs for all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, expanding its original mission from academic instruction to job training, housing, and medical and dental care; and

WHEREAS, Orange Grove has partnered with local communities, governments, and agencies in developing the programs that serve the needs of many constituents in novel ways, modeling for others what is ultimately the goal of recognizing, supporting, and celebrating the qualities of the individual; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that Orange Grove Center be recognized and celebrated for its sixty-year history of commitment to improving the lives of our citizens with intellectual and developmental

disabilities, commended for its ongoing efforts to serve our broader communities by continually looking for new ways to fully realize the potential of each individual, and encouraged to continue its mission for another sixty years as it continues and develops new partnerships to achieve common goals of a healthy, beneficial, and inclusive community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.